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QUASHY,

OR THE

COAL-BLACK MAID.

A TALE.

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BY

CAPTAIN THOMAS MORRIS.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. RIDGWAY, NO. 1, YORK STREET,
ST. JAMES'S SQUARE.

1796.

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QUASHY,
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WHERE Martinico's milk-white cliffs appear,
And two proud hills their heads fantastic rear;
Where fever'd rocks are bound with maffy chains,
Left rolling ruin overwhelm the plains;

v. 2. *And two proud hills their heads fantastic rear*] Two hills, at some distance from St. Pierre, in the island of Martinico, which have an extraordinary appearance, and are called *les Pitons*.

v. 3. *Where fever'd rocks &c.*] The town of St. Pierre stands at the foot of a precipice; and, as local earthquakes are felt in all parts of the island, which the author, from his own experience, can testify, large fragments of rocks above the town are chained to the hill, to prevent them from rolling down and crushing the houses.

Where

Where thro' the streets a limpid fountain flows,
 Cools the hot air, and murmurs as it goes ;
 And merchants boast a town, of modern date,
 That rivals Paris in her splendid state ;
 There Quashy dwelt ; a slave of lowliest kind ;
 A state ill suited to her noble mind. 10

Her eyes like gems beneath their brows were set ;
 Her teeth were iv'ry, and her face was jet ;
 Tall was her stature, as her shape was neat ;
 Her fingers small, and delicate her feet ;
 Then from her lips such melting accents broke,
 That drivers almost felt when Quashy spoke :
 Such was her person ; her superior part,
 An honest principle and tender heart.
 Was then a maid, complete in form and mind,
 A slave for luxury and pride design'd ; 20

v. 5. *Where thro' the streets &c.*] A small stream is conveyed thro' the town in a channel of masonry.

v. 8. *That rivals Paris &c.*] St. Pierre is called *le petit Paris* ; and is a place of great magnificence.

v. 9. *A slave of lowliest kind*] She was a field-negro, not a domestic one : slaves of the latter sort are seldom ill treated.

v. 15. *Then from her lips &c.*] The negro women have often voices of wonderful sweetness.

Must

Must worth like this, that might adorn a throne,
Beneath the rod of petty tyrants groan?

Perish that world, where vice triumphant reigns,
And virtue is condemn'd to scorn and chains.

While ev'ry brute lives equal to his kind,
Was man alone to toil for man design'd;
And tribes, distinguish'd by a sable face,
To pine in bondage to a paler race?

Is there a god; and can that god behold
Man, like a bullock, to his fellow sold?

30

Yes; heav'n has seen it; but will bear no more

This mart of human herds on Afric's shore:

Damn'd to the western world, her sons repair

The yearly waste of myriads murder'd there;

From parents children, wives from husbands, torn,

By modern Goths to brother Goths are borne;

Who schemes of profit from their sufferings plan,

And live in riot by the blood of man:

A harden'd crew, that no compunction fear,

But laugh at Pity, when she drops a tear:

40

v. 35. *From parents children &c.*] By the law of Mahomet, no female slave can be separated from her child: christians are not so squeamish.

To

To them scourg'd negroes' cries mad mirth afford ;
 Beings half-human, born to serve their lord.
 Curst be the man who dares such doctrines spread ;
 May each woo'd virgin loathe the wretch's bed ;
 With beasts, in deserts, may the monster dwell ;
 And furies haunt him from the depths of hell.
 O Quashy, could thy foes thy beauty see,
 Yet mock that color which gives grace to thee ?
 Could they behold thy manners and thy face,
 And not compassionate thy hapless race ? 50
 Yes ; there are men with brutal passion curst,
 To women prone, but ever to the worst,
 Unprincipled, unfeeling, unrefin'd,
 Who scarce admit that woman has a mind.
 Dull, sensual beings, quite absorb'd in self ;
 The dupes of harlots, and the slaves of pelf ;
 In filthy revels roll the human swine,
 Made sick with gluttony, or mad with wine :

v. 42. *Beings half-human &c.*] The author never could be brought to think that the negroes are an inferior race of men. But, if it were admitted, could it be allowed as a reason for treating them with cruelty ? Surely not ; but rather the contrary.

If fairest maidens win not hearts like these,
 How shall a coal-black beauty hope to please? 60
 Of this licentious crew was Quashy's lord;
 A noble once, by simple clowns ador'd:
 Faln from his state, and frantic at the loss,
 His little title gone, and little cross,
 He rush'd to war; exposing, in despair,
 That life his pride conceiv'd below his care.
 His partner was a high, imperious dame,
 Still proudly glorying in a fancied name;
 The style of *citizen* too great to brook,
 She yet was *madam with the haughty look*; 70

v. 59. *If fairest maidens &c.*] [The author inserted this line to preclude the objections of his fair countrywomen; who might suppose him a man of depraved taste, and insensible to all beauty but that of black wenches.

v. 64. *His little title &c.*] He was one of the almost innumerable marquises and counts of the French monarchy; and a knight of St. Louis, who wears a red ribbon and very small cross at his button-hole.

v. 69. *The style of citizen &c.*] The French have abolished all titles; even the term of *Monsieur* is changed for that of *Citizen*.

B

And

And when her nation made their negroes free,
 Like her mad consort, spurn'd the just decree.
 Now when the sun was sunk beneath the main,
 And sudden twilight overspread the plain ;
 When slaves, rejoicing at the close of day,
 Back to their hovels fought their weary way ;
 Quashy, resolv'd her legal rights to claim,
 Approach'd the mansion of her stately dame :
 She crept with timid step and falt'ring tongue,
 Where madam in her hammock gently swung ; 80
 And, softly warning her that slaves were freed,
 Begg'd for that liberty the law decreed.
 Long did the sable beauty plead her cause ;
 But what care dames of birth for rights and laws !
 Her, stript of privilege, no truth could reach ;
 As well might lambs the hungry wolves beseech :

v. 71. *And when her nation &c.*] The French government has abolished slavery in all their colonies.

v. 74. *And sudden twilight &c.*] As soon as the sun sets, in the West Indies, night comes on.

v. 80. *Where Madam in her hammock*] Hammocks are the sophas of Martinico.

v. 85. *Her, stript of privilege &c.*] The French nobility paid scarcely any taxes : so that the burthen fell heavy on the people.

Reason

Reason to passion is oppos'd in vain ;

Ambition baffled leaves the mind insane.

She next address'd her lewd, inhuman lord ;

For freedom argued, and his grace implor'd : 90

Mark'd for his prey, he durst her claim deride ;

Of his black haram Quashy was the pride :

Tho' brutes love brutes, by tender flames inspir'd,

He, worse than brute, could scorn what he desir'd.

She fear'd the ruffian might her spoiler prove ;

And Quashy's heart had felt the force of love :

The maid had charm'd a youth from Afric's plains,

Sold, like herself, to wear this tyrant's chains :

From the same region both the lovers came ;

The same their beauty, and their worth the same : 100

He, tall and strong, and full of manly grace,

She, blest with softness and the charms of face.

While yet a stripling her a child he knew ;

And with their years the mutual passion grew :

v. 91. *Mark'd for his prey &c.*] The amorous intercourse of masters with black slaves is too well known to need explanation ; the poor creatures dare not resist : and the horrid practice of *washing a blackmoor white* has by some old wretches been gloried in ; that is, intriguing with the mother, daughter, granddaughter, &c. till the black color disappear.

For Quashy Quaco sav'd his little gains ;
 He thought on Quathy as he hew'd the canes ;
 And, duly as the sabbath-eve was come,
 For her the rattle shook, or beat the drum ;
 Now with the damsel danc'd within the ring,
 Now fondly by her side would sit and sing ; 119
 Or, far apart, renew'd the tale of love,
 Beneath the citron hedge, or plantain grove.
 They talk'd of Guinea, and their native spot,
 The country's charms, and people's happy lot,
 Where all the negro race on cooscoosh dine,
 And crown their cheerful feasts with palm-tree wine ;

v. 105. *For Quashy Quaco &c.*] Quaco and Quashy are very common names among the negroes in their own country ; and they are frequently retained in the West Indies.

v. 106. *He thought on Quashy &c.*] The sugar-canes are here meant.

v. 108. *For her the rattle shook*] A rattle and sort of kettle-drum are used by the negroes when they dance.

v. 115. *Where all the negro race &c.*] Cooscoosh is a favorite dish in Guinea ; and is made with flour put into a cullender, and set over the steam of meat when boiling. Palm-wine is a liquor much in use among them.

But

But christian robbers poison their delight;
 They deal in man, and urge the chiefs to fight;
 That crowds of captives, in those battles made,
 May live in mis'ry, and support the trade.

120

Inhuman miscreants! Never may you know
 A moment's peace, who thrive by others' woe;
 But, stunn'd and blasted, as the Titans fell,
 May thunders hurl you to the gulf of hell.

O execrable world! Can man refin'd,
 Man train'd to knowledge far above his kind,
 In Europe bred, and taught the law divine,
 Can *he* to sordid arts his soul resign;

Teach simple tribes each other to destroy,
 And build on human griefs his horrid joy?

130

Yes, Virtue; Av'rice can thy cottage see,
 And, rich by man's distresses, laugh at thee.

Each ev'ning, when our lovers' task was o'er,
 And the dread sound of scourges heard no more,

v. 107. *But christian robbers &c.*] Merciful God, are these thy son's disciples? The trade of the slave-coast makes humanity shudder,

v. 134. *And the dread sound &c.*] The drivers, even when they do not strike, continue to crack their whips over the negroes, as carters do to keep their horses alert.

With

With smiles they met ; tho' still, with toil subdu'd,
 They scarce had strength to taste their scanty food.
 At length, forgot the labors of the day,
 Stretch'd on the ground the sable Helots lay ;
 And, when to sleep's invading pow'r resign'd,
 A pleasing dream would oft refresh the mind. 140
 Then Fancy painted, near a cane-topt hill,
 A garden, water'd by a falling rill ;
 And, in the midst, a whiten'd cot was shewn,
 The mimic whisp'ring, " these are all your own ;
 " For such sweet spots to franchis'd slaves are giv'n,
 " When dying finners make their peace with heav'n."
 But wake they must to feel their griefs again ;
 And loss of fancied bliss increas'd the pain.
 O, that each slave could thus deluded lie,
 Thus all the rage of tyranny defy ; 150

v. 138. *Stretch'd on the ground &c.*] English ladies have
 silken cushions for their lap-dogs : pigs lie on the ground :
 Negroes are the pigs of the West Indies. No slaves but the
 Helots, under the discipline of the Spartans, and the Jews,
 under that of the Egyptians, can be compared with the Ne-
 groes, under the chastisement of their christian masters, in
 the islands. As the Helots are generally mistaken for the
domestic slaves of the Spartans, the author has complied with
 that error.

Change

Change real woes for joys that genuine seem ;
 And on his bed of earth for ever dream !
 Alas ! e'en life is but a dream at best ;
 And all we covet cloy us when possess'd :
 Shall man then modes of wretchedness invent,
 And range new climes his fellows to torment ;
 Leave healthful shores where cooling breezes blow,
 From burning suns in calentures to glow ;
 When raving sailors fancy fields and trees,
 And eager leap, and founder in the seas ? 160
 Say what the gains thro' all these dangers fought :
 Why, from black princes men are cheaply bought ;
 And those for cruelty and av'rice known,
 Joy to find hearts as savage as their own !
 O Liverpool, O Bristol, brave not fame ;
 Bid your youth feel, and hide their fathers' shame ;
 Extend their commerce ; trade where'er they can ;
 But never more presume to deal in man :

v. 157. *When raving sailors &c.*] A calenture is a distemper to which sailors are subject in hot climates: the sea appears to them like green fields; and, if not prevented, they will throw themselves into it.

v. 165. *O Liverpool, O Bristol, &c.*] These are the three chief towns of Great Britain which carry on the slave-trade.

And thou, sage Glasgow, for thy learning fam'd,
 With Oxford and with Cambridge often nam'd, 170
 Art thou engag'd in this ungodly work ;
 Thou, boastful of thy faith and holy kirk ?
 Reflect what ills from self-delusion spring ;
 Faith void of morals is a dang'rous thing ;
 Mistaken mortals pray but to their cost,
 If, while they pray, humanity is lost.

Wak'd from a flatt'ring dream, the lovers rose
 To rigid labor, urg'd by dread of blows.
 Oppress'd with sultry heats, in open glades,
 They view'd with longing eyes the distant shades ; 180
 But, while they hop'd a moment's rest to gain,
 An iron-hearted driver mock'd their pain.
 High climb'd the sun : the soft, meridian breeze
 Play'd on the deep, and whisper'd in the trees ;
 From orange groves delicious odors spread,
 And flow'ring shrubs their mingled fragrance shed :

And

v. 183. *High climb'd the sun &c.*] The sea-breeze rises when the sun is near the meridian, and is wonderfully refreshing ; it is daily looked for with eager expectation by the colonists almost fainting with heat.

v. 162. *And flow'ring shrubs &c.*] The author calls the orange

tree

But thou, poor Ethiop, from thy country torn,
 Hard whipp'd, half nourish'd, and with labor worn,
 What is the fragrance of the grove to thee;
 The flow'ring shrub, or variegated tree? 190
 No balmy groves can minds in torture suit;
 Their silver blossoms, or their golden fruit:
 Thou enviest e'en the kid that skips and plays;
 And tears of anguish waste thy toilsome days:
 Condemn'd to censure what thou can'st not scan,
 And deem thy god unkind, who made thee man.
 Self-slaughter is thy creed, by nature taught;
 And Quaco, thy compatriot, felt and thought:

Yes,

tree a variegated tree, because it produces fruit and flowers at the same time, ripe and unripe fruit; all which, joined with the green leaves, make a delightful variety of color.

v. 193. *Thou enviest e'en the kid &c.*] Kid is the food of the inhabitants of Martinico: sheep will not thrive there.

v. 197. *Self-slaughter is thy creed &c.*] The unhappy negroes, thro' despair, often destroy themselves. The most common mode of doing this, at Martinico, is, by sitting in the steam of a wood called by the french *bois d'Inde*: they swell, and die. The french employ black doctors, called *panseurs*, to watch them; who are possessed of an antidote, which removes the swelling, and cures them. As a proof of their contempt of life, occasioned by their sufferings, the author can-

Yes, Hume ; this race, whose pow'rs thou could'st not see,
 These dwarfs in intellect, can think, like thee ; 200
 And, had not love the hope of change supplied,
 By his own hand the gallant slave had died.
 Tho' Nature's smiles this pair no more could please,
 The purest luxuries to hearts at ease,
 Yet cooling winds their spirits serv'd to cheer,
 And made the noontide labor less severe.

not avoid the mention of a circumstance which happened in his presence. A frenchman had desired him to take charge of a negro for a few hours, who had run away, and been taken in the woods. The author's duty obliged him to receive him into his guard-house. When the master came for him, the slave folded his arms, looked him stedfastly in the face, and refused to move forward ; the master beat him with a walking-stick on his bare back, for he had no covering, except a piece of cloth round his middle. The frenchman was a tall, raw-boned man, and laid on unmercifully. The slave never flinched. When his master was tired with beating him, he put on the most determined look the author ever beheld, and which reminded him of Garrick's frown, saying to his master, in his broken dialect, "*Ze me tue moi.*"—"What!" cried the author, "does he say he will kill himself?"—"Yes," answered the frenchman ; "and I know he will do it, if he be not watched : but I'll take care to prevent it."

v. 199. *Yes, Hume ; this race &c.*] Hume considers the negroes as an inferior race of men, incapable of attaining knowledge in arts and sciences. The same philosopher vindicates suicide.

When

When lo ! a fleet appear'd ; a thousand sails
 Peep'd o'er the waves, and caught the rising gales :
 Nearer and nearer came the splendid show ;
 And Britain's flags display'd announc'd the foe : 210
 Discarded monks survey'd them with delight ;
 Degraded nobles kindled at the fight ;
 The cannon's roar was echoed all around,
 And Freedom's black battalions curs'd the sound.
 All rush'd to arms ; and, in a moment's space,
 The fields were dark with Ethiopia's race.
 While all was turbulence and war's alarms,
 The lovers fled to join their friends in arms,
 With one domestic, long in friendship tried,
 A faithful dog, that slept by Quaco's side. 220
 Patriots and rebels, arm'd, each other fought ;
 Like bandits, robb'd ; and, like barbarians fought :
 Our Ethiop warrior soon his master spied,
 In all the trim of military pride ;

v. 207. *When lo ! a fleet appear'd &c.*] The english besieged Martinico, where great numbers of emigrants had transported themselves.

v. 214. *And Freedom's black battalions &c.*] The french armed and disciplined the negroes whom they had made free.

Aw'd, he drew back, nor would his lord engage;
 He mark'd the well-known frown, and shunn'd his
 rage :

But, when pursued with speed, and closely prest,
 He fac'd, he fir'd, and pierc'd the tyrant's breast;
 Then to his brave companions boldly flew,
 And many a rebel foe in triumph flew : 230
 So the young lion, stalking from his den,
 With eye retorted, shuns the steps of men;
 Till, chac'd, he turns, and, with tremendous roar,
 Swills the slain hunter's blood, and fears no more;
 Conscious of pow'r, from meaner prey he flies,
 And, at each meal, a human victim dies.
 Fierce was the combat; for each negro fought,
 To save the freedom by his suff'rings bought;
 That freedom, which a gen'rous nation gave;
 That freedom, doubly purchas'd by the brave : 240

v. 226. *He mark'd the well-known frown &c.*] We read in ancient history, that slaves, in an insurrection, were terrified when their masters approached, cracking their whips; and it is said, that the same thing was practised with success, at Jamaica, many years ago.

v. 231. *So the young lion &c.*] This behavior of the lion is asserted by modern travellers.

Nobles

Nobles, turn'd tigers from the loss of pow'r,
 Now hunted men they could with joy devour;
 A race of heroes of exalted birth;
 Too proud to mix with common sons of earth:
 One curst, one blest, both this and that decree;
 Nobles made citizens, and slaves made free.
 Stretch'd on the field a thousand warriors lay,
 Who fought for pow'r, for freedom, or for pay.
 But justice fail'd; and, till the sun was low,
 The rebel columns chas'd the flying foe. 250
 The wounded Quaco long no help could meet;
 But honest Jone lay howling at his feet:
 So the high-spirited Arabian steed,
 Tho' all around he sees the battle bleed,
 Neighs o'er his rider prostrate on the ground,
 And all the distant hills return the sound.
 At length his yell a chief's attention drew;
 A feeling man among a savage crew;
 Not by false manners, but by virtue known;
 An emigrant, and yet no monster grown; 260
 For hearts there are that nothing can mislead,
 Which freeze and shudder at a barb'rous deed.

v. 253. *So the high-spirited &c.*] This noble generosity of
 the Arabian war-horse is affirmed by a modern traveller. *Jone*
 is a dog's name frequently used by the natives of Guinea.

He,

He, like the good Samaritan of old,
 Could not unmov'd a suff'ring foe behold;
 Who crav'd his pity, in a suppliant tone,
 A pray'r for pity, seconded by Jone;
 He heard his master's voice the chief entreat,
 And moan'd, and fawn'd, and lick'd the stranger's feet.
 For one in pain this honest man had felt;
 A dog's attachment made his bosom melt: 270
 A bier was brought; and two dependants bore
 The bleeding warrior to the neighb'ring shore;
 Near which a hulk was moor'd, in purer air,
 For sick and wounded under skilful care:
 There Quaco, to a boatman's charge consign'd,
 Found a fell tyrant to the negro kind;
 And, ere the skiff the vessel's side could gain,
 Was seiz'd, and headlong thrown into the main.
 The faithful Jone had walk'd beside the bier,
 Ever affectionate, and ever near; 280
 And, when forbidden in the boat to stay,
 Thro' gently-rolling waves pursued his way;
 Till now, half spent, and distant from the shore,
 He saw his patron sink, and rise no more;

v. 239. *Near which a hulk was moor'd &c.]* In the West Indies, the sick and wounded are generally lodged in hospital-ships, for the sake of fresh air.

Then

Then slow, dejected, to his home return'd,
 Fawn'd on his master's best belov'd, and mourn'd :
 'Twas all he could : he felt the cruel stroke ;
 And, had but words been granted, Jone had spoke :
 Had tears been his, in torrents tears had run ;
 For dogs would weep the deeds by christians done. 290
 In the cool covert of a plantain grove,
 Fond Quashy sat, and trembled for her love ;
 With pains she had procur'd, for Quaco's sake,
 A yam, a coco, and cassava cake ;
 And up the rocky steep had climb'd, to bring
 Large gourds of water from a chrystal spring.
 Thro' long suspense her breast tumultuous grew :
 From strange reports she strange conclusions drew :
 Each moment to her ear sad tidings came ;
 Tho' always sad, yet never twice the same, 300
 She doubted much, but thought his life secure ;
 For many things were said, but nothing sure :
 Loth of his wounds the rumor to believe,
 How could her soul his dreadful end conceive ?
 But now approach'd a figure, pensive, slow,
 The faint, unwilling, messenger of woe ;
 Deep marks of sorrow o'er his brow were spread ;
 His arms were folded, and he hung his head :

Her fears foretold the tale he meant to tell ;
 Her fight began to fail ; she sunk, she fell. 310
 Conflicting passions soon had turn'd her brain ;
 In thought she heard her Quaco's voice again :
 Safe from the field of death the youth she prest,
 And crowds with shouts receiv'd the welcome guest :
 So, when the linnet, fetter'd from his love,
 Foils the young clown, the tyrant of the grove ;
 Soon as the captive bird has slip't the string,
 And hurried to his mate on flutt'ring wing,
 Her heart beats quick ; her friends around her throng ;
 And the wood echoes to the choral song. 320
 But such delusion soon must have an end ;
 For ever gone was Quashy's bosom friend ;
 Wak'd from her trance to woes unknown before,
 To hear the horrid tale, and hope no more.
 She swoon'd ; recov'ring, but to swoon again ;
 She shunn'd her friends, and daylight gave her pain ;
 The night was wasted in unquiet sleep ;
 She rav'd for Quaco buried in the deep ;
 In dreams she visited his wat'ry grave,
 And high above her roll'd the boist'rous wave : 330
 So, down Niagara's stupendous slope,
 Drops the bold traveller, who grasps the rope,

And

And, headlong rushing thro' the small cascade,
 Gains the proud arch by rock and water made ;
 Below the torrent roars, with foam o'erspread,
 And bursting billows tumble o'er his head.
 Despair now whisper'd, and her heart approv'd,
 Not to survive the constant man she lov'd ;

v. 336. *And bursting billows &c.*] The author was in this situation. He had been told that travellers had stood between the rock and the water ; but never could meet with any such person. His friend, General Montgomery, had attempted it, and declared it was impossible to breathe there. He descended, however, with three other gentlemen ; and, after much toil and difficulty, reached the bottom of the *Fall*. To arrive at the great, or rather *immense*, sheet, it was necessary to rush thro' a small one. The author offered to go thro' it, if any one would follow him. Two of the other three declined it. One promised to follow ; and kept his word. They stood, entirely at their ease, for the space of five minutes, under an arch, formed, on one side, of hollow rock, one hundred and thirty-six feet high, and, on the other, of water precipitated from that rock ; which arch might contain five hundred men, in a situation perfectly free from wet. The noise was stunning ; and the strait, as far as the eye could trace it, was nothing but a heap of foam. When they had stood five minutes, a whiffing wind arose, and drove the spray in their faces, in a manner that was very disagreeable, and, at last, intolerable. They staid, on the whole, ten minutes ; and then returned as they went.

Mild, but resolv'd, and hiding her intent,
 Forth to the woods the beauteous Ethiop went : 340
 She fell'd the tree, whose qualities ensure
 To wounded minds an everlasting cure ;
 Whose vapor oft the wretched negro tries,
 Till, by its strange effects, he swells and dies.
 Her hut was clos'd, the pile funereal laid ;
 A cloud of smoke involv'd the coal-black maid ;
 One tear she dropt, on bidding Jone adieu ;
 But home and Quaco open'd to her view :
 She yielded to the fate her soul desir'd,
 Call'd on her lover, and in peace expir'd,

v. 348. *But home and Quaco &c.*] The African negroes believe that, when they die, they return to their native country.

F I N I S.